

Involving the Public

During the course of the project, citizens throughout the Keys have had opportunities to comment and contribute to the FKCCS. Three series of public meetings, in July 2000, March 2001 and April 2002, were held throughout the Keys. In addition, a FKCCS Web site was established to share information, as well as offer additional opportunity for public comment.

A Speaker's Bureau was developed to bring the FKCCS to the varied organizations throughout the Florida Keys including civic organizations, homeowner's associations, Chambers of commerce, business organizations, service clubs, environmental groups and other special interest groups. The FKCCS Traveling Exhibit was designed to accomplish that same goal and it started touring in November 2000 and has maintained a consistent schedule for a one-week display at banks, libraries, government and civic meetings, events and festivals throughout the Florida Keys.

Evaluating the Science

In November 2001, the independent and highly regarded National Academy of Science (NAS) received an interim report and evaluated the preliminary draft CCIAM. In March 2002, NAS and other scientists and technical experts provided a critical review of the CCIAM to enable the Study Team to make final revisions as needed. This critique was imperative to the success of the FKCCS and the Study Team is addressing those issues and concerns brought forward by NAS and other technical experts that can be improved.

The Study Team was tasked with creating the CCIAM using existing data. All of the data utilized in the FKCCS went through peer review and a

quality control process. Data used in the FKCCS has been successfully used in other studies.

The Study Team has concluded that they do not have the science or technology to model the impacts of land development activities on the marine environment and will discuss the data at length in the final report.

The Study Team continues to support the FKCCS and the CCIAM as a viable tool for the planners of Monroe County.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES DILLON O'ROURKE

What's Next?

In order to maintain the beauty of our islands and our quality of life, we need to know how much land development the Florida Keys can sustain. After the FKCCS is complete the CCIAM will be available to local governments so that additional scenarios can be evaluated.

A complete technology transfer to local and state governments is scheduled to occur in June 2002. This will assist communities in selecting which future is right for them, while ensuring the range of available choices are within the limits of the Keys' carrying capacity.

The Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study

Vol. III

Carrying Capacity Analysis



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Using science to help determine what's sustainable in the Florida Keys - both in terms of quality of life for residents and visitors and the islands' natural resources - is what the Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study is all about.

The Study Goal

The purpose of the Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study is “to determine the ability of the Florida Keys ecosystem to withstand all impacts of additional land development activities.” (*The Florida Administrative Weekly*, April 12, 1996)

History

In 1996 the governor and cabinet called for the preparation of a “carrying capacity analysis” of the Florida Keys in response to the hearing officer's report on the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan. In a cooperative effort, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and Monroe County have conducted the Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study (FKCCS) to look at the impact of additional land development activities on the Florida Keys.

In 1999, the FKCCS was initiated. Previous studies from both public and private sectors were gathered and the following areas were extensively researched: natural resources, wastewater, stormwater, water quality, ecosystems and species of concern, human infrastructure, transportation and hurricane evacuation, social environment, socio-economics, sustainable tourism, quality of life, community character, rate of growth and land use regulations.



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Creating A Carrying Capacity Impact Assessment Model



PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIK HUTCHINS

Key to utilizing the Study was the creation of a Carrying Capacity Impact Assessment Model (CCIAM) that employs environmental thresholds and tolerance limits to determine the impact of additional land development activities on the ecosystem. The effect of land use changes on the natural environment, human infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions within the Study area are evaluated in the computer model. A change in land use includes new development, redevelopment and restoration. While all aspects of the Study could not be addressed with the model, they have been analyzed in a variety of other ways, such as special reports, and this information has been factored into the final results.

The CCIAM and the Carrying Capacity Study do not generate a human population number; rather they identify the range of development options that are within the carrying capacity framework of the Florida Keys.

Providing A Planning Tool

The Study has also resulted in the development of a Routine Planning Tool (RPT) designed for everyday use by state and local planners. The RPT uses the same data as the complex CCIAM, but is an assessment tool for routine planning decisions rather than long-term growth management adjustments such as comprehensive plan amendments.

Developing Scenarios

A series of scenario development workshops were held in 2001 by the Study Team for Monroe County and local municipality planners to create scenarios to use in a preliminary test of the CCIAM. Scenarios are primarily defined by changes in land use. Planning time frames, land for future development, transportation, environmental interventions and best management practices were considered in the formulation of scenarios.

The FKCCS has been managed by Ann Lazar, Florida Department of Community Affairs; Debbie Peterson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and Ricardo Calvo, Ph.D., technical contractor URS Corporation.

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For the most recent information on the FKCCS, visit: www.saj.usace.army.mil/projects and double click on FKCCS on the left side of the screen.